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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

Last night, China conducted an underground nuclear test at the Lop Nur test site in northwest China, despite the urging of more than 20 nations, including the United States, not to do so.

The United States deeply regrets this action. We urge China to refrain from further nuclear tests and to join the other nuclear powers in a global moratorium. Such a moratorium will contribute to the achievement of the Administration's goal of completing a Comprehensive Test Ban by 1996, to which the Administration is committed.

The President has today directed the Department of Energy to take such actions as are needed to put the U.S. in a position to be able to conduct nuclear tests next year, provided the notification and review conditions of the Hatfield-Exon-Mitchell amendment are met in the spring of 1994.

The President's ultimate decision on whether to test will be based on fundamental U.S. national security interests, taking into account:

- The contribution further tests would make to improving the safety and reliability of the U.S. arsenal in preparation for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTB).
- The extent to which China and others have responded to the U.S. appeal for a global moratorium on testing.
- Progress in the CTB negotiations.
- The implications of further U.S. nuclear tests on our broader non-proliferation objectives.

Administration officials will begin consultations at once with Congress and our allies on these issues.

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Background Information

U.S. Response to China's Nuclear Test

Today, China conducted an underground nuclear test at the Lop Nur test site in northwest China. More than 20 nations, including the United States, had urged them not to do so, in order not to undermine our non-proliferation efforts.

The President has therefore directed the following in response to today's Chinese test:

- The Department of Energy will take such actions as are necessary to put the United States in a position to be able to conduct nuclear tests next year provided the notification and review conditions of the Hatfield-Exon-Mitchell Amendment are met in the Spring of 1994.
- The President's ultimate decision to test or not test will be based on U.S. fundamental national security interests and will take into account (1) the contribution further tests would make in improving the safety and reliability of the U.S. arsenal in preparation for a CTB, (2) the extent to which China and others have responded to the U.S. appeal for a global moratorium, (3) progress in the CTB negotiations and (4) the implications of further U.S. nuclear tests on our broader nonproliferation objectives.
- Administration officials will begin consultations at once with Congress and our allies on these issues.

The Clinton Administration remains committed to the goal of completing a Comprehensive Test Ban by 1996. The United States urges China to refrain from further nuclear tests and to join the other nuclear powers in a global moratorium.

The United States has been engaged since July with many other nations to prepare for multilateral CTB negotiations. The Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, with the strong support of the United States and the other four nuclear weapon states, decided on August 10 to give its Nuclear Test Ban Ad Hoc Committee a mandate to begin these negotiations in January 1994. We are also working with others on a UN General Assembly resolution on a CTB which we hope will command broad support. We hope and expect that China will help to bring about a CTB and will carry through on the commitment China has made to Secretary of State Christopher to seek to negotiate a CTB by 1996, a goal that we share.